

# THE WAY FORWARD

Protecting Children and Nurturing Mississippi Families

August 2016

## 76 Prospective Foster Parents Attend Pine Belt “Rescue 100” Event

The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services partnered with Mississippi Children’s Home Services, Southern Christian Services for Children and Youth, the Mississippi Community Education Center, and 200 Million Flowers to host a foster parent training at William Carey University in Hattiesburg during the last weekend of July.



Mississippi Supreme Court Justice Dawn Beam of Sumrall, who chairs the Mississippi Commission on Children’s Justice, brought the organizations together to help address the need for foster homes in Mississippi. At the time “Rescue 100” was announced, there were 802 children in foster care in Region 6, with only 302 foster homes, 150 of which were only licensed for relatives.



Region 6 includes:

Forrest, Lamar, Marion, Pearl River, Perry, and Stone Counties.

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### THE WAY FORWARD

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In just three short days, 76 families accomplished what would have otherwise taken months by completing the in-depth training required prior to becoming licensed to care for children involved in the child welfare system.

Rescue 100 was a great success, and this event has encouraged the agency and its partners to continue with this model of training throughout the state, with the next event scheduled for the weekend of October 21-23 in the Jackson Metro area.

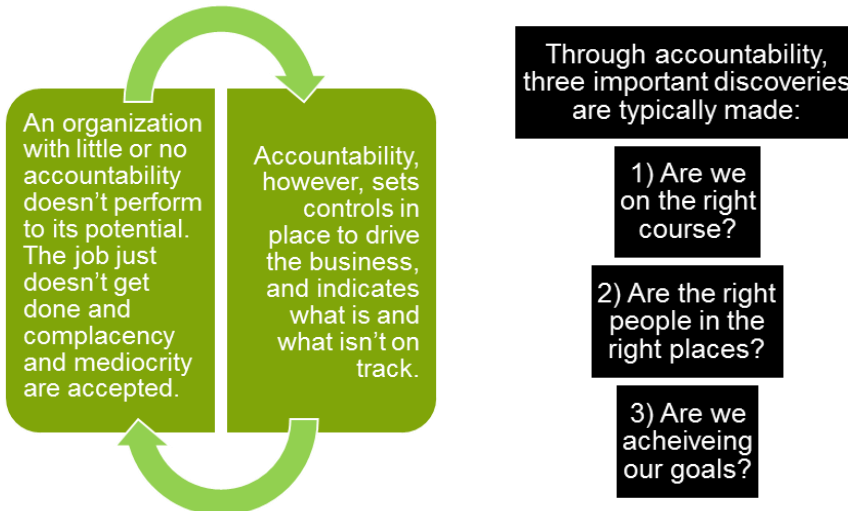


# Accountability & Quality Improvement

## What does this mean for MDCPS?

# Why is CQI important?

The standard Merriam-Webster definition of accountability is “an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one’s actions”.



Accountability also means owning the “not so good” decisions that have the potential of being learning opportunities. Our transitioning agency is operating differently in that the status quo is no longer acceptable. Everyone has a role in improving accountability measures within MDCPS, and teamwork is necessary to reach our common goal - successful outcomes for the families we serve.

All states are required to put into place ongoing Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) processes that allow them to identify the strengths and needs for improvement within their child welfare programs and to make improvements where they are needed. The federal government monitors states' operation of CQI processes through the Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSR) which occur periodically in all state child welfare agencies. The next round of CFSR reviews will occur for our Agency in 2018. MDCPS has designated units as part of those ongoing change efforts.

Quality improvement support exists within the MDCPS CQI unit, and tools and processes within field operations are imperative to the needed change in our Agency's practice and goals. Some of these processes are:



By taking ownership of our current practices and the appearance of those practices, it offers a realistic perception of our standing in meeting the obligations of the *Olivia Y.* lawsuit and offers clarity to what direction should be taken. The knowledge gained in our ownership and realistic perceptions may also help identify the ineffective or outdated practices that should no longer be utilized.

You may ask, “Why is this important? What role do I have in CQI?” The simple answer is that everyone who is employed by the Agency and even relevant stakeholders have a vital role. Quality Improvement starts with YOU! Our performance in completing our designated duties and assignments should be quality centered with the understanding that our professional decision making and actions set the tone for accountability.

The focus the supportive CQI units is to create objective, realistic, and truthful feedback for everyone involved so that “everyone knows what everyone knows.” Some of their functions are: 1) provide individual feedback from debriefings or team settings; 2) through conferences - offer a neutral setting for all case members to review and plan towards permanency of our foster children; and 3) provide an understanding of outcome measures through utilization of data reports. EMU and FCR can offer more of a qualitative feedback as to where changes may be needed whereas the data reports offer a quantitative snapshot without capturing the story of our practice. Both function types are vital in the measurement of our professional performance.

As we perform our job duties and activities each day, utilizing and being open to feedback is an opportunity for professional growth in skills. It may also open the door to gaining perspective in working toward the common goal for this agency... continuous quality improvement.

## Progress with the *Olivia Y.* Court Orders

MDCPS is preparing to meet with Public Catalyst mid-August to discuss the agency's progress as it relates to the December 2015 Interim Remedial Order and the May 2016 Second Stipulated Remedial Order filed in the *Olivia Y.* litigation.

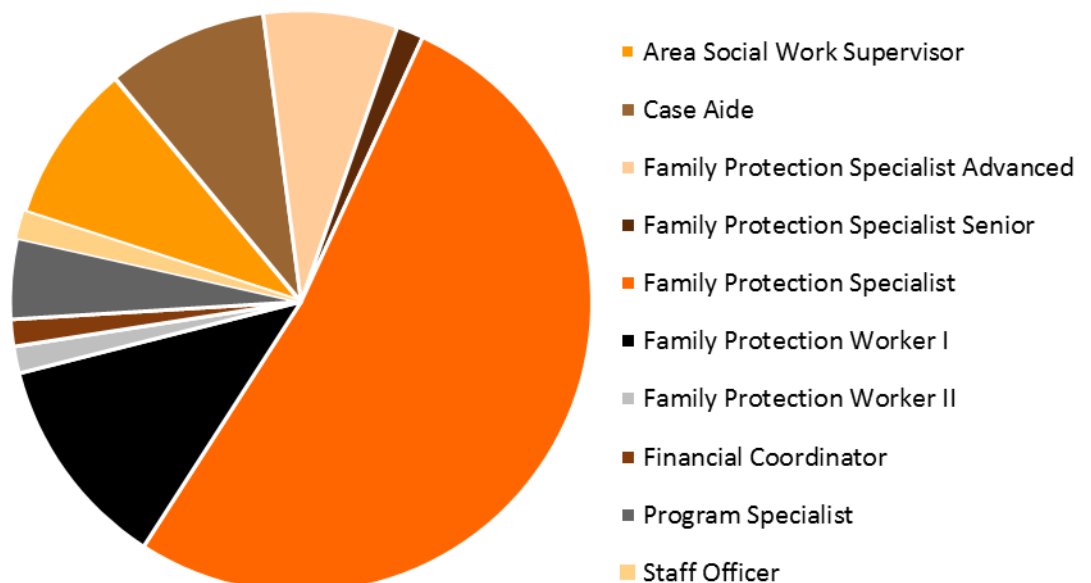
We are also currently working with Public Catalyst to assess the number of children in unlicensed placements as well as the number of available resource homes in order to establish a plan of action of how we can reduce this number. Protecting children and nurturing Mississippi families is our top priority.



MDCPS is on track to meet the hiring goals authorized by the Legislature. From June 15 to July 31, 2016, 67 new employees were hired, the majority of which went into Child Welfare field positions. The chart on the right shows that over half, 52%, of MDCPS' new recruits are Family Protection Specialists.

## MDCPS is GROWING!

New Staff by Position for June & July of 2016





# Prevention Corner

## Utilizing the Protective Factors: Nurturing and Attachment

MDCPS Field Staff are constantly juggling caseloads, and it is hard work to provide every family with encouragement and services every day. Even when Field Staff are running all day and tired, they push even more to provide families with the services that they deserve and need. This is why it is so important to implement the protective factors while working with families.

In this article, we will focus on the protective factor of “Nurturing and Attachment.” So how do we, as MDCPS, begin to strengthen our families in this area?

When working with families, look for opportunities to give the parents proven research. Parents should know that if they nurture and give love and affection to their child in the early stages of life, the child has a better chance of getting higher grades in school and developing a stronger ability to cope with stress later in life so that they can grow into happy and healthy adults.

The physical development of a child is directly affected by the nurturing they receive from their parents. An infant's brain develops best when parents work to understand and meet the infant's needs for love, affection, and stimulation. Without the parent's affection, the child can grow into a teen that lacks early attachments and has a hard time functioning with his/her peers. Also, a lack of interaction with a caregiver can even change an infant's body chemistry causing a reduction in the growth hormones essential for the infant's brain and heart development. Staff could use parent education workshops and programs and lending libraries as avenues to share information about how a strong parent and child bond can foster strong brain development.

MDCPS Staff should share that strong families show how much they love each other. Staff can suggest that families work together and play together by having family game nights, having arts and crafts family time, reading books to their children, and teaching new parents basic infant massage. One way that parents can nurture their older children is by taking time to listen to them, being active in their child's school and extracurricular activities, and being aware of their child's friends and what truly interests them. A parent must always be willing to support and speak up for their child when necessary. Staff sharing helpful resources from their agency and community on how parents can nurture and connect with their children on all age levels is very important in implementing protective factors.

Promoting the importance of the family including all important adults in a child's life, as part of the child's “Nurturing Network”, helps build the family bond with the child as the center. Staff must quickly recognize when a child is not responding to a parent in a positive manner, because that parent may need a referral for additional services in supporting the family's growth and preservation.

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*“An ounce of  
PREVENTION is  
worth a pound of cure.”*

*- Benjamin Franklin*

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To learn more about “Nurturing and Attachment” see the  
[2016 Prevention Resource Guide – Building Community, Building Hope.](#)